

## **Fish Keeping & Showing 30 years ago - Somethings Don't Change**

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I joined the FGA in 1972 having seen these fascinating fish at Jack Snowden's. Jack ran a nursery and had a small aquatic shop on the premises. It was not long before I was hooked and a part of my garage was converted to hold tanks. It was not long before I realised that the moisture in the air was doing little to help the compressed board in the roof so I bought an old chicken shed and put that in the garden and eventually had forty tanks running.

My first visit to the Manchester Section proved interesting. They met in a room above a pub at Belle View and, one Sunday lunchtime my wife dropped me off outside the pub, in the rain and drove off. Little did I realise that this was the wrong pub. The venue was at the other side of the park and the alternatives were to pay the entrance and walk through the park or walk all the way round the outside. This I did and arrived looking like the proverbial drowned rat. However, I was made most welcome and always enjoyed attending their meetings.

I used to enjoy our regular trips to Birmingham. We once had an interesting experience. Our car was overheating so we stopped on the hard shoulder of the M6. We were approached by a young lady who wanted help changing a tyre. We agreed to help IF one of the girls could provide a pair of tights we could use as a fan belt. When we arrived at the girl's car she opened the back door and said to her friend "Get your tights off". The young lady's horror expression said it all!

I was involved with the European Championships Alan mentioned in his article. What fun, to get a 6 am call to drive the 60 miles to Manchester Airport to pick up a delivery of exhibition guppies. I remember an instance when the freight company representative called me to follow him to customs. He said whatever I did, I should simply agree to whatever customs said. There were my boxes in a cold warehouse OPEN.....

For several years I edited the monthly Journal. I was always worried whether I would get enough information. Then came the difficult bit; typing the gestetner master sheets on my old type writer then saying a little prayer that the machine would print properly and not spew out multi-copies at once. This was especially annoying when printing the reverse side.

My Section in the North West was very good at putting on exhibits. One year we took our fish to the Preston Guildhall for four days as part of a hobbies exhibition. We were chosen by BBC North West to be part of the build-up TV coverage and I well remember TV presenter Stuart Hall fast asleep on our sofa at home whilst the cameraman got rather annoyed that the fish would not stay still so he could film close-ups.

We also attended the Scottish Aquarist Festival in Motherwell for a couple of years, trying to help the infant Scottish Section. This show was in early March but in a warm hall. Three stalwarts volunteered to help and duly turned up early doors on the set up morning. But

they looked like Eskimos' as they had stayed the night in their caravan in a temperature of minus four!

We moved venue several times in an effort to keep numbers up. For a couple of years we were in a local Masonic hall, then a Methodist church hall before moving to the canteen of a wine wholesalers. (Never any samples left out for us though)

Alan talked about buying the foreign exhibits. I once bought a huge pregnant female from a top sword line. A few days later I went on holiday and when I returned my next door neighbour reported that she had fed the fish regularly and there had been only one fatality - you've guessed, my new female who had got out through the small gap at the edge of the glass cover.

My favourite type of guppy was the double sword. I had a strain of golden double swords with pink eyes for a year or so but could never get any size on them.

It's still a small world though. I run a hardy orchid nursery and when exhibiting at the RHS Tatton Show was approached by a couple, Mrs Brown and her son Jeffrey who were members in the 70's. Jeff used to come over from furthest Yorkshire by train to attend meetings. They no longer have guppies but still keep Killifish.

I hope my few thoughts are of interest to      Contact author: JcrHutch@aol.com